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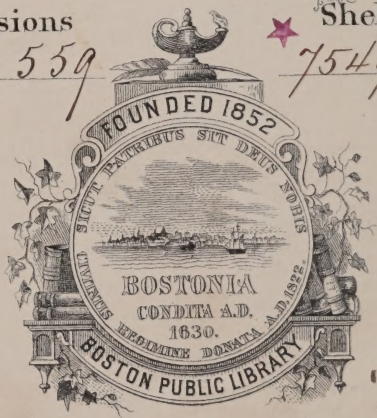
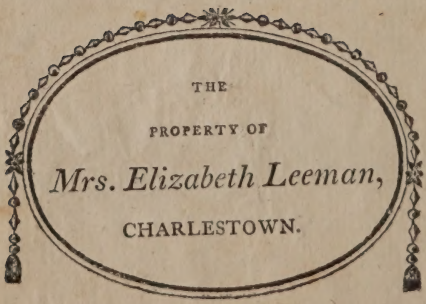


Received Mar. 22, 1889.

Mrs Mary White (maiden name Leeman) died April 9th Aged 89 yrs 13 Days

MR. STONE'S
HALF CENTURY SERMON.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DISCOURSE,

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MAY 19, 1811.

IN WHICH,

WARNINGS OF DEATH

ARE CONSIDERED AS

EXCITEMENTS TO REVIEW LIFE.

BY ELIAB STONE,
PASTOR OF THE SECOND CHURCH IN READING.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE HEARERS; TO WHOM IT IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE FRIEND, THE AUTHOR.

SECOND EDITION.

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HALF CENTURY SERMON.

2 Timothy, iv. 6.

I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

THESE are the words of an aged minister and inspired apostle of Christ; uttered when he had the certain prospect of shortly entering the eternal world, and of receiving an irrevocable sentence from his final judge. If ever a man feels solemnity of soul, and speaks the real sentiments of his heart, it will be at such a time. These therefore may be considered as the dying words of St. Paul, and are deserving the serious attention of all. The sayings of dying men are generally heard with regard by their friends, and often repeated with pleasure.—Especially may this of the apostle claim our attention, as it manifests the infinite worth of religion, and shews with what bright prospects, what substantial comfort and joy a real christian dies. Let it therefore be treasured in our memories, that we may be excited to live the life of the righteous, then our last end like his will be peace.

When St. Paul wrote this epistle to Timothy, announcing his speedy departure, he was an old man. For in his epistle to Philemon, written some time before, he styles himself "Paul the aged." He was therefore undoubtedly admonished of his approaching dissolution by the infirmities of age. But he speaks of his death, not merely as probable, but as near and certain. He was then a prisoner at Rome in close confinement. He well knew the malice and rage of his

enemies, and how much the reigning powers were bent upon the destruction of christians. At a previous trial when he gave his first answer, and all his friends forsook him, he saw that he had nothing to expect from the lenity of his persecutors, and that he must die a martyr in the cause of Christ. I am now ready to be offered. I am just going to have my blood shed by wicked hands, and poured out as a libation on God's altar. Accordingly, tradition informs us that Paul was beheaded without the gates of Rome, and that on the same day, not far from the same place, Peter was crucified. Paul was freed from the ignominy of a crucifixion, because he was a Roman citizen; and by the laws of Rome all her citizens were exempted from suffering such a death. In addition to this, as he wrote all his epistles under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he was unquestionably informed, that he was soon to depart and be with Christ, which for him was far better than to abide in the flesh. But whatever were the grounds of his persuasion, he was sure that his departure was at hand, and the event proved his expectation well founded. In this situation he wrote to Timothy to come to him without delay. Do thy diligence, says he, to come shortly unto me. This he might desire from various considerations. He might wish to impart to him further instructions, and by his last words animate him with firmness in preaching the gospel, and encourage him to steadfastness in the faith. Paul also himself might desire to be refreshed by the company of his friend. For it is gratifying to those, who are expecting shortly to die, to be surrounded by their pious friends; that they may unite in prayers to God, and that they may give and receive counsel and comfort.

The reason which induced me to make choice of the present subject for our meditations this day is, tomorrow will complete half a century since I was solemnly consecrated to the gospel ministry. It is a

period to which very few attain in the ministerial work, and forcibly admonishes me that my departure cannot be far distant. Surely then this fiftieth anniversary of my ordination to the ministry ought to be a day of serious reflection with us all, but especially with myself. You will therefore, it is hoped, hear with patience an old man, while, in the presence of God he converses with himself of death, and attempts, from a short review of the period just passed, to impress on his own mind the certain evidence there is that the time of his departure is at hand, and lead you to those reflections which the occasion and subject may suggest.

God, my hearers, in various ways, admonishes men of their approaching death. In his word we are told, There is no man liveth and shall not see death; that it is appointed to all men once to die. In the same sacred volume we are informed of the reason of this divine appointment. St. Paul observes, "by one man (meaning Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." You see then that the wages of sin is death, or, in other words, sin caused death. So surely, then, as we have sinned, so certain may we be that we deserve and are doomed to die. What a deadly enemy then is sin to our race! how ought we to hate and avoid it! how earnestly should we strive to be freed from its dominion! that when we die, through Christ the sting of death, which is sin, may be taken from us.

In many other ways does God warn all men that they are mortal, as by bodily pains, weaknesses, and various kinds of disease; for all these are but the consequences of disobedience, which will ere long prove fatal. Moreover, God admonishes us of our own deaths by the deaths of others around us, in the circle of our friends and neighbours; or in the more tender relations of life, as of husbands, wives, children, &c. When death enters a house, and removes one or more of a

family, the survivors must be stupid in a high degree, not to know that the language of Providence is, "Prepare to meet thy God: be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." These are general calls to arouse all to be always in readiness for their departure. Others, as death approaches nearer, receive more frequent, solemn and louder admonitions of their dissolution. Such are the aged in general, and aged ministers in particular.

God in his word has informed us, that the days of our years are threescore years and ten, which is the common extent of human life. Few survive that period. If life is longer protracted, it is not so properly called living, as dying a lingering death. For the Psalmist adds, If by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow. The justness and propriety of this beautiful expression will be felt by every one passing from the seventieth to the eightieth year of his age; and in a manner of which no young or middle aged person can have an adequate idea. Agreeably to the word of God, then, the man who has lived seventy years, has lived out human life. The time which any man lives longer is in a manner borrowed from eternity; or rather is conferred by an uncommon interposition of God's providence. All above seventy, therefore, have information from heaven that the time of their departure is at hand. Fourteen days ago your pastor completed his seventy-fourth year. His death, therefore, according to the scripture account of man's life, must be near.

But he has other warnings of his dissolution. He feels in himself the harbingers of death. Deaf ears, dim eyes, trembling hands, feebleness and stiffness of limbs, a sinking faintness, and a frequent tremor at the seat of life, all admonish him, that the earthly house of his tabernacle will soon be dissolved. He is sensible, too, that the powers of his mind are abated;

that his memory is treacherous, and his recollection, particularly of names, very slow. And undoubtedly all his mental faculties are abated. I say undoubtedly, for a great difficulty with old men is, as the powers of their minds are impaired, they become more and more incompetent judges how much they have failed. I request you therefore, Christian friends, that you would not suffer your pastor to continue in the work of the ministry among you any longer than he is useful. I mention these things, not because I am unwilling to serve you so long as my labors can be beneficial: but because I heartily deprecate the thought of standing in the way of your profiting. I must charge you therefore before God, you see to it that this does not take place. I am willing to be worn out in your service; but I am unwilling to attempt to carry on the ministerial work any longer than my exertions, through God's blessing, may tend to promote your eternal salvation. It has been my frequent prayer, that I might not become a burden on society, but that by divine goodness I might retain my strength and faculties to serve my Maker and generation till my very last moment. And should Divine Providence order that my death take place in this desk, while laboring in the glorious cause of winning souls to Christ, my heart deceives me if I cannot sincerely say, My God, thy will be done.

But although the preacher has mentioned, as above, the infirmities of age, under which he labors; yet nothing can be further from his mind, than thinking hardly of God. He rejects such thoughts with abhorrence. In these infirmities, there is no reason of complaint, but of praise. For they are common to the aged, and sent by God in kindness to warn them that death is fast approaching, and that they should always be in readiness for their departure. The preacher has special reasons for praise more than many others of his age. For he has more comforts and less infirmities

than some of them. He has the consolation of religion ; and besides these he has his pleasant intervals and cheerful hours, in which he enjoys life and the society of his friends. He can read with as good a relish as ever ; and although he cannot retain what he reads as in youth, yet he thinks his reading hours well spent. They give him present pleasure, and he hopes profit. For although much of what he reads is soon forgotten ; yet as fair water passing through a dirty sieve serves to cleanse it, so divine truths passing through the mind, tend to purify it more and more. He would not exchange the privilege of reading for a royal crown. He has frequently in the night season his wakeful hours. But these to him are far from being irksome. They are often most pleasant. When surrounded by darkness, and all things are silent, then we may meditate without interruption ; then we may with advantage survey the past scenes of life, and commune with our own hearts ; then we may profitably contemplate the perfections and government of God, and pour out our souls to him in prayer. Your pastor warmly recommends to all persons who are subject to wakeful hours, to turn and fix their thoughts on some divine subject. He knows that in this way restless moments may be changed into seasons of comfort and delight.

But further, your aged pastor is warned, that his departure is at hand, not only from what he feels in himself, but also from what he sees around him. Does he look into his church, he finds but four persons now living who were members when he was ordained, viz. one male, and three aged widows. He has buried nearly a whole church, six of which were deacons. The consequence is plain, you must soon bury him. Does he look through the congregation, he sees as great a change. Of those who were legal voters when he settled, not more than six or eight remain. By far the greatest part of his present hearers were then either

children, or not born. Your fathers, where are they? In the silent grave. He who now speaks to you will shortly be united to them. You will see his face no more, till you and he, with the whole human race, meet at the bar of God.

Do we take a view of this town, and inquire respecting its public teachers; we shall find that there have been twelve congregational ministers. Some of them continued in the ministerial work but a few years before they were removed by death. Three of them in succession continued each about twenty years. The Rev. Mr. Hobby, their successor, inferred that the life of a Reading minister would be but twenty years generally. Accordingly, when he had completed the 20th year of his ministry, he preached an occasional sermon, to remind himself and his people, that according to former dispensations of Providence, they must soon part. Yet obtaining help from God, he continued nearly fourteen years afterwards. Of the nine deceased ministers in Reading, not one reached the fortieth year of his ministry. The venerable Daniel Putnam, the first minister in this parish, remained longer in the sacred work than either of the others. According to his own record in this church's book, he was ordained its first pastor June 29th, 1720. On the same book of records I find written (I suppose by his son) as follows: "June 20th, 1759. Then the Rev. Daniel Putnam departed this life, after a long indisposition, (as from the 10th of September, 1758) in the 63d year of his age; having served in the gospel ministry 39 years wanting nine days."

From this account it appears that your present pastor, through divine goodness, has been continued in the work of the ministry among you a little more than eleven years longer than any other minister who has been ordained in Reading since the incorporation of the town, a period of 167 years. While this solemnly reminds him that his dissolution cannot be remote,

may he be enabled, through divine grace, to express his gratitude to God, who has lengthened out his life so far beyond that of any of his predecessors, by bearing much fruit in old age.

Again, if we look still further around us, we shall find Divine Providence addressing to me the same admonition, that my departure is at hand. If we survey the counties of Suffolk, Essex and Middlesex, we shall not find one clergyman who has been so long in the ministry as myself. All in these three counties who were ordained before me, and many who entered the ministry since, are dead and gone.

Once more, the speaker is warned of his departure by the number of generations to which he has administered in this place. He has had the very rare instance of six generations, in a direct line of descent, sit under his ministry.

The plain inference from all the foregoing observations, is this, your pastor is on the brink of eternity. He wishes for your candor and charity to bear with his infirmities. The trial of your patience will be short; he hopes for your kindness and care to comfort and sustain him, while bending under the burden of years. He asks your prayers for him, that he may be useful to the close of life; that he may be tranquil and resigned in death, that he may obtain mercy of the Lord in the great day, and that hereafter, he and you may be each other's joy and crown.

Having thus, my friends, considered the warnings which God has given me of my approaching departure, I shall now proceed to shew what use we are to make of such warnings, and what effect they ought to have on our minds. God in all his dealings with us has wise and kind designs. When he admonishes us, that death is near, his design is to quicken us seriously to consider how we have lived; what is the state of our hearts; and hence learn our future prospects. That this is the intention of God in warning men of death,

is inferred from the conduct of St. Paul, mentioned in connexion with our text. He had such information, that he certainly knew his death was near. He says, the time of my departure is at hand. Under the influence of this persuasion, what was his conduct? He viewed his life, and as the result of serious self-examination, he was led to make this declaration: I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, and kept the faith. And when he considered his faith in Christ, and knew it to be genuine, by the good fruits it produced, he had comfort in the thought of dying. He rejoiced in the prospect of a future glorious, eternal reward. So he writes, Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day. But the sure prospect of his own salvation was not the only source of his joy. The gladness of his benevolent heart was increased, when he considered the myriads of the faithful, who with him would be crowned with immortal glory. For he adds, This crown of glory shall be given, not to me only, but to all them also, who love his appearing. Happy in death is the man, who has lived such a life! May the certainty of death arouse every one of us to engage with diligence and vigour, in the Christian warfare, and to get and keep the faith. Then we shall receive a crown of righteousness; joys unutterable, and lasting as eternity.

The example of St. Paul, the chief of the apostles, is worthy of our imitation. When he was warned of death, he considered how he had lived, with a view of knowing what his future state would be. Every one of us have been warned by God's word and providence, that death is our certain doom. Some of us, particularly the preacher, has had repeated, loud, and solemn calls, that death was near. All, therefore, especially the latter, should review life, and carefully examine how they have discharged the duties of their several stations. You will consent then to hear your pastor,

as in the presence of God, give an account of what he has done, as a minister of Christ for fifty years past.

I can with uprightness adopt the language of the apostle Paul, recorded 1 Cor. chap. ii. at the beginning:—Brethren, when I came to you, I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. That is, to open, explain and enforce the great essential doctrines and truths of the gospel of Christ. And I can add, as in the next verse, I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. I was conscious of my insufficiency for these things. I feared lest I should not do the work of the Lord faithfully. I trembled at the thought of the curse that will fall on those who do the work of the Lord deceitfully. But I have a witness in my own breast, and I trust there are three who bear witness for me in heaven, that I have delivered nothing to my people, but what I deliberately and conscienciously thought to be agreeable to the word and will of God; and that I have kept back nothing which I thought would be profitable unto you; but have shewed you and taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. But notwithstanding my well-meant endeavours to serve you in the gospel, I am sensible that many imperfections and failings have attended my ministerial labors, and that I have the utmost occasion to apply to that atoning blood which was shed for the priesthood as well as the congregation. Here, my friends, is the foundation of all our comfort and hopes. The sinner's heart, when conscious that he has done amiss, must break with penitential grief; and he must rely for obtaining pardon and a restoration to the friendship of God on the sacrifice and grace of the Son, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and who died for our sins. If this faith in Christ be genuine, it will work by love to God and men, it will purify the heart, and habitually

dispose to maintain good works. But if the sinner's pretended faith leave him still in love with sin, so that he commits it readily and with greediness, it is good for nothing ; it is no better than the faith of devils ; it is merely a hypocritical pretence.

This, my friends, is my view of the method of salvation by Christ. This in miniature is the gospel which I have preached ever since I came to your fathers. This is the method of salvation on which my own hopes of future happiness are founded. When I thus build my hopes on Christ, I feel myself safe, as standing on a rock amidst the tempestuous ocean, which the boisterous waves can neither shake nor undermine. For I am persuaded that the man who lives in the habitual exercise of repentance toward God and an operative faith in Christ, has no occasion to tremble at the approach of death. For him to die must be gain.

It has been the sincere aim and anxious solicitude of your minister to convince you of sin, to set before you the awful danger of your situation as sinners, to awaken you to repentance, to excite you to flee immediately as for the life of your souls, and to lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel. He has labored to persuade you to enter early on a religious course, and in this way to continue seeking for glory, honor and immortality, till you should obtain eternal life. In this method, through God's blessing on his labors and your exertions, he has thought, and he still thinks, the great object of his embassy is to be accomplished. This he considers the sure road to heaven. As an affectionate father, as your minister just ready to be taken from you, I beseech you to walk in it. Humble yourselves before God. Exercise yourselves unto godliness ; and endeavour to possess a lively faith in the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. Then fear not. You will have nothing to fear. God will be for you. Christ, in whom you trust, will give you strength to triumph over death and every foe, and to rejoice in hope of a blessed immortality.

In order to profit you, it has been my practice to endeavour to enlighten the understanding, before I attempted to awaken the passions; lest the passions, being without a guide, should run into enthusiasm, or lead to some wrong course. But after shewing the reasonableness and excellency of divine requirements, your pastor has considered it proper to attempt to excite the affections. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, he has endeavoured to alarm the fears of men, with a view of stirring them up to flee from the wrath to come. But as love is the most noble incentive to action, he has more frequently attempted to awaken this generous affection in your hearts, from the consideration of the astonishing goodness of God, in providing for us a glorious Saviour, even his own son; as also from the ineffable condescension and compassion of the Redeemer in suffering and dying to deliver us from perdition. Some have said, that too much terror has been preached; others not enough. Hence the preacher has inferred, that he has steered the middle course, which is generally the safest.

Your minister has never attempted to inform you what are the secret decrees of God: for this very good reason, he did not know them. He believes that secret things belong to God; that those, and those only, which are revealed are for us and our children, and designed for instruction and edification. He has never told you that God is the author of sin; because he did not believe it; since an inspired apostle hath said, it is impossible for God to lie; and it is equally impossible for him to do any thing that is wrong. But all sin is wrong; therefore God cannot be the author of it. Your minister has never told you, that all the thoughts, words and actions of unrenewed men are sins; because this would tend to discourage the sinner from seeking for divine mercy, which God has required; and because that many thoughts excited in the sinner's mind are suggested by the word and spirit

of God. But to suppose the spirit of God suggests sinful thoughts to men's minds, is to represent the Holy Spirit doing the work of Satan, the tempter and adversary of men, which in his view is horrid blasphemy.

He has never represented to you that the penitent and the impenitent, the holy and the unholy, shall all meet and be happy in heaven: because God hath said in his word, the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. Reason also dictates, that an exemplary difference ought to be made between these two descriptions of men. These are speculations, which he considers not merely vain, but dangerous and tending to licentiousness. He is not however disposed to say, while they continue mere speculations of the head, without corrupting the heart, they will prove fatal. The preacher has charity for every denomination of christians, who live as the grace of God, which hath appeared in the gospel, teacheth them.

Although the most laborious part of the ministerial service is in the study and the pulpit, yet there are other duties very interesting, which demand attention; such as directing the doubting, comforting the disconsolate, catechising the children, visiting the sick, praying and conversing with them according as their situations and circumstances may require. With great pleasure your minister attended, for many years, the useful business of catechising the youth under his care, till the infirmities of age, in conjunction with other difficulties, prevented him. I believe there are very few, if any among us, but will acknowledge that the sick have been attended to by your minister with assiduity. His stated rule has been to visit them the first opportunity after being notified of their sickness, and to continue his visits till recovery or death has rendered them unnecessary.

It has been the practice of your pastor, founded on reflection, never unnecessarily to add affliction to the afflicted. He believes that an attempt to increase the terror of those who are in deep distress, will serve rather to drive them to distraction of thought, than produce that state of calm reflection, which is highly requisite in a sick and dying man. In case of stupidity and hardness of heart, it may be proper to administer terror. But it will be with little prospect of softening the heart in a few hours, which has been hardened for many years. In such a state, attempting to excite alarm may hasten on death and eternal destruction ; to neglect it may be equally fatal. In this delicate and trying situation, what must be the feelings of a minister, who wishes to do every thing which man can do to save a soul from eternal death? Language cannot describe them. Perhaps the astonishing love of God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, described in melting language, will sooner draw, than the terrors of the Lord drive such a soul to God. Of all the difficulties attending ministerial duties, that mentioned above, is one of the greatest.

This parish was incorporated, October 20, 1713. Some years previous to this, the inhabitants had erected a house for public worship nearly where the present one stands, and occasionally had preaching. The church here, it is probable, was gathered at the time of Mr. Putnam's ordination. It consisted then of thirty-nine members, seventeen males, and twenty-two females. There were added to the church during the Rev. Mr. Putnam's ministry one hundred and ninety-two persons ; five hundred and forty-one were baptized. The number of baptisms during my ministry has been eight hundredand seventy-six ; some adults, but chiefly children. In the same term of time there have been received into this church, three hundred and three. The whole number of professors at this time is ninety-two ; thirty-three males, and fifty-nine fe-

males. The marriages in and out of the parish have been three hundred and eighty.

The number of deaths in this society since my connection with it, has been four hundred and seventy-six. The greatest number in any one year was twenty-one. The least number in any year, was two. The average number of deaths annually is between nine and ten. When these deaths have taken place, I trust I have not failed to mourn with you. But I will confess that I have been less afflicted by some than others. When an infant is taken away from the evil to come, and as we trust to its heavenly Father's full house, a few friends only can be affected. But when one of the main pillars of society falls, the whole building is weakened and shaken to the centre. Some of your fathers who have fallen asleep in Jesus were men of wisdom and prudence, of virtue and piety, firm friends to religion, constant attendants on public and private worship, and always ready in various ways to strengthen the hands and encourage the heart of their minister. When such agreeable companions, such fast friends, such ready assistants, were removed by death, my heart broke and bled. Through God's goodness the wounds have been healed. But the scars I shall carry with me to the grave. While I have any existence their memory will be precious to me. But when one friend, when many friends have failed, the repairer of breaches has raised up others. From my first settlement down to the present day, there has been a constant succession of influential characters, friends to christianity, to gospel order, and helpers of him who labors here in word and doctrine. Many now on the stage are not behind their fathers in wishing success to Zion, and in helping to promote her peace and prosperity. Your minister with pleasure has seen you rising up by his side, and becoming useful members of civil and religious society. By your kind offices you have greatly helped and comforted him in his old

age. He this day publicly presents to you his cordial thanks for all your favors and kind attentions. His fervent prayer to God for you is that your reward may be great in heaven. After experiencing your kindness for so long a time, he is encouraged to hope that it will not be withdrawn during the short space of his life which remains; but that your indulgence will continue and increase with his increasing infirmities. He requests an interest in your prayers for him, that he may be enabled to finish his course with fidelity and joy, and at the great day he may receive a crown of righteousness.

The consideration that we have lived together a long time, teaches us that we must soon part. But your departing pastor feels such affection for his flock, with whom he has dwelt so many years in unity, and such solicitude for their best interest, that he is unwilling to leave them, without suggesting some thought which may be useful to them, after he had rested from his labors. Men in general are careful and troubled about many things. But he in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid, has said, "One thing is needful." And that one thing is religion, or a due concern for the soul. This consists in the exercise of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. A repentance which fills the heart with godly sorrow for sin. A faith which works by love, purifies the heart, and produces good works. These are the great, the all-important things in religion. Ten thousand speculations and controversies about abstruse points, (to common capacities incomprehensible,) compared with these, are vanity and vexation of spirit, producing doubts and sometimes infidelity. Shun these dark things as dangerous; but let it be your daily care that your faith and repentance are such as the gospel requires. Never think your repentance is of a godly sort, unless it causes you to forsake every sin, and shun even the appearance of evil. Think not your faith is

saving unless you copy Christ's example; or, in the language of St. Paul, until the grace of God which bringeth salvation teacheth you the denial of ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. Be very careful in your examinations; for holiness of heart and purity of life are essential to salvation. Without these, you perish forever. Christ died not only as an atoning sacrifice for sin, but to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Are faith and repentance of such infinite importance, be entreated to use all suitable means to have them, through God's blessing, formed in your hearts. For this purpose consider how innumerable your sins are, how aggravated, being dishonorary to God, your best friend, wounding to religion, and destructive to your own best interest. With hearts lifted to God for his blessing on your exertions, continue meditating on such humbling subjects, until the grief of your hearts is uttered by your lips, in the language of sincere penitence, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

That your faith in Christ may be rational and firm, consider how exactly the predictions of the prophets, concerning his coming, sufferings and death, have been fulfilled. Recollect the many astonishing miracles he wrought, particularly rising from the dead as foretold by himself, which demonstrated with irresistible evidence, that he was what he pretended to be, the Son of God. See, with grateful hearts, the benevolent tendency of the doctrines, precepts and maxims which the Saviour taught the world. If all lived as Christ directed, we should have heaven beginning here on earth.—All these considerations demonstrate, that the christian religion is DIVINE; that it came from God, and was sent in love to men, to fit them for, and guide them to joys ineffable and eternal.

Can you calmly consider these substantial evidences of the truth of christianity, and yet be an infidel? Can you weigh them as their importance demands, and not

be a believer? It is impossible. My friends, as I love you, as I wish your eternal felicity, I entreat you to think of these things, until you feel them, and live as this grace of God teacheth. Set about the work immediately; tomorrow may be too late; life is uncertain; death is at hand; eternity is depending; delays are infinitely hazardous. Exert therefore all your energies, with a humble dependence on God, to save your souls from death. And cease not your exertions, but continue faithful till death, and then of the grace of God you will receive a crown of life.

Is religion of such ineffable concernment, then, cultivate it not only in your own hearts and families; but take care to have it taught publicly, that all may hear and profit. Your present pastor will soon leave you; but you must not live a day, unnecessarily, without another. For if a private person, or a whole community, live without the public worship of God, all sense of religion is soon lost, and the most baneful consequences ensue. Your first business, when you attempt a re-settlement of the gospel, will be with God. You must, with public humiliation, fasting and prayer, beseech him for Christ's sake to forgive all your sins, particularly your misuse and abuse of gospel privileges; and that, of his abundant goodness, he would soon send you an able minister of the new testament. To these public divine services, you must add your daily fervent prayers, to the great Lord of the harvest, that he would graciously send a faithful laborer into this part of his vineyard. The consideration of the greatness of the blessing you seek, how interesting to the risen and rising generations, and even to the children unborn, should influence you not to cease wrestling with the Almighty until you prevail.—Not only ask God to help you, but try, by his assistance, to help yourselves. Take advice of men, of ministers, such in whom you can with safety place your confidence. But after all, hear and judge for yourselves. Be not captious. Let a calm, well informed mind guide

your judgment in this interesting business. Attend carefully to the general tendency of your candidate's preaching. If it tends to make you less fearful of sinning, and more negligent in working out your salvation; it may injure many, but can profit none. If he tells you that you can do nothing, or nothing but sin; dismiss him. You need not his assistance, to help you, either to sin, or to do nothing. If he says you are not fit to be saved unless you are willing to be damned; hear him no more. For he teaches you to counteract the will of God, who says he wills all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. Such vain speculations may puzzle and perplex the head, but will never edify and comfort the heart. If his preaching serves to explain and enforce the great doctrines and duties of christianity, so as to beget faith and repentance as above explained, you ought to esteem him highly in love for his work's sake. Take heed that you obtain a minister of morality and piety; exemplary in his walk, devout and fervent in his worship. Fall not out by the way. Cultivate love. Be yielding one to the other. Never settle a minister to the grief of a respectable minority. Hear others until you have a good, if not a perfect, union. If you wait long before you unite in any candidate, be not discouraged; but be more fervent in your prayers to God for this precious ascension gift of Christ. Continue thus to do until you are generally united; and I confidently believe, in this way you will obtain a good minister of Jesus Christ. My faith is founded on observation, for fifty years past. I do not recollect a solitary instance of any people, who have conducted as above directed, without success.

Excuse this long address. It is the fruit of love, and an ardent wish that you may so conduct when I am gone, that the God of peace and love may dwell among you, and be glorified by you and your posterity forever. AMEN.

(Dec., 1888, 20,000)

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